

THE POCKET ARMENIAN

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GAME OPENINGS! GAME OPENINGS! GAME OPENINGS! GAME OPENINGS!

We have openings in as many regular Diplomacy games as there is demand for. Our game fee is \$5.00, including subscription to the magazine as long as you are still in the game. All country assignment will be done at random. All players will receive a copy of our house rules upon entry into a game.

Besides running regular Diplomacy games, we have openings in a Fall of Rome tournament. Many people have asked what this is, wondering how we can have a tournament in a solitaire game. Basically each player is subjected to the same conditions as far as Barbarian Creation, Internal Revolution, etc. are concerned. Therefore, players' relative achievements can be assessed. We can have up to eight people in this; we would like at least four.

We are also willing to run games of Origins of World War II, if there is any demand. Game fee is the same for all games. Tell us which game you want to be in; if we receive too many entries for the Fall of Rome Tournament, we'll take them in the order that we receive them. That is an unlikely prospect, however.

Since we are sending out over one-hundred copies of this issue totally free, we are at present greatly in need of people for games. If there is any particular variant you're interested in playing and you can get a few others interested also, we'll be glad to run it for you. We would like to run a Youngstown game ourselves, if we possibly can.

We are willing to trade with almost any magazine out there, but we can't trade with you if we don't know who you are. Please send us copies of your 'zine, or a letter, or something. If the copy of this you receive says "TRADE?" under the address, it means just that.

Edi Birsan announces in his "semi-regular, semi-literate [sic]" flyer NEW YORK KNIFE that the next over-the-board games of Diplomacy in New York City will be held on July 6, noon, at House of Games (72nd St. bet. Columbus & B'way). Price is \$2. Besides regular Diplomacy, there will be Youngstown games, and maybe Westphalia.

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THE POCKET ARMENIAN
c/o Scott Rosenberg
182-31 Radnor Rd.
Jamaica, N.Y. 11432

Editors:
Scott Rosenberg
Matthew Diller
Adam Kasanof
Greg Costikyan

THE POCKET ARMENIAN is a magazine of Diplomacy & related & unrelated matters. Subscriptions are 10 for \$2.00.

We welcome contributions: we pay 4 free issues per printed piece.

Send all letters, money, subs, press, death-threats, and especially money to the above address.

I AM THE VERY MODEL OF A MODERN MAJOR DIPLOMAT
OR
THE PROVINCES

(With apologies to Gilbert, Sullivan, and Lehrer.)

There's Venice, Piedmont, Rome, Tunis, Naples, and Bulgaria,
Bohemia, Silesia, Tyrolia, Rumania,
St. Petersburg, Sevastopol, Moscow, and Ukrainia,
Budapest, Vienna, Greece, Galicia, and Serbia.

Marseilles, Brest, Paris, Ruhr, Holland, Belgium, Spain, and Burgundy
Munich, Trieste, Berlin, Kiel, Livonia, and Gascony,
Yorkshire, Wales, Liverpool, Clyde, Edinburgh, and Picardy,
North Africa, Portugal, Skagerrak, East Med. and the Baltic Sea.

Finland, Sweden, Norway, Warsaw, Ankara, Armenia,
Constantinople, Tuscany, Tyrrhenian and Syria,
Denmark, Smyrna, London, West Med., Irish, and Albania,
Adriatic, Helgoland, Ionian and Bothnia.

Mid Atlantic, North Atlantic, Barents, Black, and North seas,
English Channel, Gulf of Lyon, Aegean and Norwegian seas.
These are the only provinces appearing on the standard board:
There may be more in variants, but these are herein ignored.

--Scott Rosenberg

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"Convincing testimony to the unique position of Vergil in Roman estimation is to be found in the so-called Sortes Vergiliana, i.e., the practice, in vogue as early as the time of Hadrian's reign (117-138 A.D.), of seeking to learn the future by opening at random a volume of Vergil and taking as an omen of coming events the first line on which the eyes fell. Even emperors consulted Vergil in this way. The custom lasted many centuries. Aside from the famous Sibylline Books, only two other works -- the Homeric Poems and the Bible -- have been thus venerated. It is said that Charles I of England once experimented with the Sortes Vergiliana, opening at the passage in Aeneid IV (615-621) in which Dido is praying that wars, defeat, and death may be the lot of Aeneas. The Sortes Vergiliana were used during the World War (1914-1918 A.D.)."

--from the introduction to The Aeneid, edited by
Charles Knapp, Ph.D., published in the Lake
Classical Series.

THE JAPANESE-CHINESE ALLIANCE IN YOUNGSTOWN

by Scott Rosenberg

In the Youngstown Variant, conflict generally divides itself into two spheres: Europe and the Far East. Although some inter-relationships develop because of the Off-Board boxes and Colonial powers, on the whole the European powers concern themselves with European affairs, and the Asian powers Asian affairs, until late in the game.

For the Asian powers to emerge strong enough from the Asian sphere to defeat the generally stronger European powers, they must be careful in choosing alliances. For any of the three major Asian powers to ally with any of the European powers that are involved in one way or another with the East can be, although is not always, fatal. Therefore, the most successful Asian alliance system is usually one that is completely Asian.

It is well known that one of the most successful bases for an alliance in Diplomacy is a close alliance between a land power and a sea power. This same principle holds true in Youngstown: in the East, players have found that a long-range, closely-coordinated alliance between China and Japan is the best combination for an Asiatic win.

In this alliance, Japan should build fleets only, and China armies, unless Japan specifically requests that China build another fleet, and China can afford the extra supply center. China should never miss an opportunity to build another fleet, so that he can protect his coasts in case of a Japanese stab. Therefore, these fleets should not stray too far from the Chinese coast.

As far as openings are concerned, it is usually best to hit Russia as quickly as possible, because it is very embarrassing to be fighting with all your fleets down south against England and France and to discover that Russia has just built a fleet in Vladivostok. After Vladivostok and Korea are taken, China usually projects some of his armies against Central Asia and the rest move south against England and France, and later, India. The Japanese fleets make their main effort against France and England, while protecting the Japanese home islands from English and French Off-Board box incursions.

Sensitive spots in this alliance are East China Sea, Korea, and Formosa. It is probably best for China to stick to the Mainland supply centers and Japan the islands.

The most likely alliance to oppose the Japanese-Chinese is an Anglo-French. Not only does this give the two colonial powers some measure of security (defensively) in 1901, it makes it easy to create a second front against Japan by way of the Off-Board boxes. If India is added to this alliance, it is likely that the Japanese-Chinese alliance will be stopped. Unfortunately for her, India comes out on the short end of the stick anyway: if she choose not to ally with England-France, she will be swallowed up by China, and if she allies with England-France, she will probably be stabbed and left without an ally.

If Japan-China can break through the Anglo-French fleets, India's downfall is almost guaranteed. Soon afterwards the alliance will hit its most difficult obstacle: the various stalemate lines that extend from Omsk, through Turkestan, Iran, and the Arabian sea, to the West Indian Ocean. The best way to break this stalemate line is to send fleets into all the Off-Board boxes, both the ones leading to the Atlantic and the southern ones, which will be more directly useful in the breaking of the stalemate line, while simultaneously encouraging bickering and dissension amongst the powers that have constructed the line.

Of course, I have not yet considered the possibility of stabbing. In general, early stabs are not fruitful; they leave Japan and China easy prey to Anglo-French and/or Indian-Russian attack. Stabs in mid-game may or may not be successful depending upon the individual situation. Late game stabs, if the alliance has been successful, are almost inevitable, unless the players agree to a concession to both powers.

Although the Youngstown variant is novel because of the addition of Asia to the regular European Diplomacy board, the decisive action still occurs in Europe. One of the few ways to beat this European monopoly on power is the Japanese-Chinese alliance, which, if played well and with a little luck, can beat Europe more times than any other combination of Asian powers.

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WORST OPENING MOVES

by Greg Costikyan

Many articles, most of them tedious, have been written about good openings. However, very few, if any, have been written about bad openings. I intend to rectify this horrendous wrong.

But why would you want to know bad openings? It is common knowledge in Diplomacy fandom that to be a BNF ((Big Name Fan--Ed.)), one must be a lousy player. Also, if you are fascinated with press, using lousy opening moves can create some rather interesting press situations.

Guiding Rules:

- I. Accomplish as little as possible.
- II. Antagonize as many other players as possible.
- III. Leave yourself as open as possible to attack.

TURKEY: Against Armenia:

Sp. '01: F Ank-Bla
 A Smy-Ank
 A Con H
 Fa. '01: A Con-Arm
 F Bla C A Con-Arm
 A Ank S A Con-Arm

Against The World:

Sp. '01: F Ank-Con
 A Smy-Arm
 A Con-Smy
 Fa. '01: F Con-Aeg
 A Arm H
 A Smy-Ank

AUSTRIA: Against Italy:

Sp. '01: F Tri-Adr
 A Vie-Tyo
 A Bud-Tri
 Fa. '01: A Tyo-Ven
 F Adr C A Tri-Apu
 A Tri-Mogadiscio

Against The World:

Sp. '01: F Tri-Adr
 A Bud-Gal
 A Vie-Tyo
 Fa. '01: F Adr-Ion
 A Gal-Boh
 A Tyo-Pie

GERMANY: Against Germany:

Sp. '01: Everybody Holds
 Fa. '01: A Ber-Mun
 A Mun-Kie
 F Kie-Ber

Against the World:

Sp. '01: A Ber-Sil
 F Kie-Den
 A Mun-Tyo
 Fa. '01: A Sil-Gal
 F Den-Ska
 A Tyo-Pie

ITALY: Against Mexico:

Sp. '01: A Ven-Tyo
 A Rom-Tus
 F Nap-Trn
 Fa. '01: A Tyo-Swi
 A Tus-Pie
 F Trn-WMed
 Sp. '02: A Tyo-Swi
 A Pie S A Ty-Swi
 F WMed-Mid
 Fa. '02: A Tyo-Swi
 A Pie S A Tyo-Swi
 F Mid-Caribbean

Against The World:

Sp. '01: A Rom-Tus
 A Ven-Tyo
 F Nap-Ion
 Fa. '01: F Ion-EMed
 A Tyo-Boh
 A Tus-Pie

ENGLAND: Into the Setting Sun:

Sp. '01: F Lon-Eng
 F Edi-Nrg
 A Liv-Iri
 Fa. '01: F Eng-Mid
 F Nrg-NAT

Against Spitsbergen:

Sp. '01: F Lon-Nth
 F Edi-Nrg
 A Liv-Cly
 Fa. '01: F Nth-Nrg
 F Nrg-Arctic
 A Cly H
 Sp. '02: A Cly-Spi
 F Nrg C A Cly-Spitsbergen
 F Arctic C A Cly-Spitsberge

FRANCE: Against Switzerland:

Sp. '01: A Par-Bur
 A Mar H
 F Bre-Mid
 Fa. '01: A Bur-Swi
 A Mar S A Bur-Swi
 F Mid S A Bur-Swi

Against The World:

Sp. '01: F Bre-Eng
 A Par-Bur
 A Mar-Pie
 Fa. '01: F Eng-Nth
 A Bur-Ruh
 A Pie-Tyo

RUSSIA: March to Siberia:

Sp. '01: A Mos-Urals
 A War-Mos
 F Stp(sc)-Bot
 F Sev-Bla
 Fa. '01: A Urals-Kazakh
 A Mos-Urals
 F Bot-Bal
 F Bla-Con

Against the World:

Sp. '01: A Mos-Ukr
 A War-Gal
 F Stp(sc)-Bot
 F Sev-Bla
 Fa. '01: A Ukr-Liv
 A Gal-Boh
 F Bot-Bal
 F Bla-Arm

(Continue with your armies
 across Russia and Siberia,
 and with your fleets, out
 of the Baltic and Mediter-
 ranean, through the North-
 West Passage to Siberia.)

1776: ARE THE BRITISH IDIOTS?

by Scott Rosenberg

Avalon Hill's most recent wargame, 1776, has stirred up a great controversy among those players familiar with SPI games and their systems of displaying "the idiocy factor" and command control. These people claim that the British Army in the Revolutionary War is one of the best examples in history of an army plagued by poor commanders and command problems-- even better than that of the Union Army in the American Civil War. The total absence of any readily apparent inclusion of this fact in the 1776 game system is therefore cited as the one major flaw in an otherwise competent game.

This lack of an "idiocy rule" in the game leads many people, without even playing the Campaign Game once, to declare it a giveaway to the British. I have played the Campaign Game four times so far, and the score is even: Two British victories and two American.

Even if it didn't affect the balance of the game, the realism buffs would shun the game because of the omission of command control. If you are included in this group, I do have a suggestion: to simulate poor British leadership, whenever the British player is called upon to pick a Tactical Card, instead of letting him choose the card, he must pick it at random. If this is too drastic for you, let him choose a card at random and decide whether he wants it. If he chooses not to keep it, he must pick another, again at random, and stick with this second pick.

I have received two major criticisms of this rule. Firstly, that it lets luck, instead of the players' relative abilities, decide the game. Let's face it, any idiocy rule will take decisions out of the hands of the players and into those of "Lady Luck."

The second criticism is perhaps more valid. It points out that this rule allows for the simulation of tactical idiocy, but totally ignores strategic idiocy. On first glance, this is true. But the rule's effect on the British player's mentality is drastic: no longer can he attack at moderate odds (2 or 3 to 1) with much hope of success. For instance, I once witnessed a situation in which eighteen British points attacked one American point, and the British player, in accordance with the above rule, chose a "Withdraw" card. Thus, the rule indirectly affects the player's strategic thinking in that he must use overwhelming force if he expects any success offensively. Defensively his potential losses are greatly increased, so that he must tie up larger amounts of troops defending captured territory, which is, in effect, the same thing as units immobilized due to "command control" rules.

I do not personally advocate use of this rule; I prefer games which pit one player (or strategy, if you play solitaire) against another, rather than ones that test a player's die-rolling ability (cf. American Civil War). I present the rule here for the benefit of those who would not play 1776 otherwise, since I feel that these people would be missing out on a remarkably well done game (for Avalon Hill).

THE SINO-SOVIET BORDER

A One-Act Play by Adam Kananof

(The curtain rises. We see two Chinese Border Guards walking towards a peasant's house a short distance from the Sino-Soviet border.)

Guard 1: I wish this was Canada. Then we wouldn't have to stand guard at that nauseating border station.

Guard 2: But if this was Canada, we'd be menaced by the fascist imperialist Americans, and we'd have to stand guard against the possibility of bourgeoisie attack.

Guard 1: Think, stupid, if this was Canada, we'd BE imperialists, too, so we wouldn't HAVE to stand guard against other imperialists, now would we?

Guard 2: Yes, that makes sense. But what could be worse than being an imperialist?

Guard 1: The first thing that comes to mind is being in the Red Army and having to stand guard against our Marxist neighbors on this God-, excuse me, Mao-forsaken border. Although come to think of it, the rigors of being an imperialist do sound excessive. All the liquor you can drink, all the cigarettes you can smoke, a home with servants and every convenience, a gigantic flashy automobile, respect from everyone; yes that would be hard to tolerate.

Guard 2: Yes, being a bourgeoisie imperialist does seem to have superficial inducements, but there is always the matter of spiritual slavery to be considered.

Guard 1: Quite true, my friend, quite true.

(They walk onward towards the house, offstage, where they halt to speak to someone standing by the roadside, also offstage.)

Guard 2: What is your difficulty sir?

Person at roadside: No difficulty. I'm just waiting.

Guard 2: For whom, if I may ask?

Guard 1: Spit it out! Who are you waiting for?

Person at roadside: I'm waiting for Godot.

Guard 1: Have fun.

(The guards walk on, reappearing on stage in front of a small house belonging to a peasant.)

Guard 1: You there! We're from the People's Liberation Army! Get out here, if you please!

(A peasant shuffles on stage.)

Peasant: Can I help you?

Guard 1: Get me a glass of beer, sir, if you would, and if you might also make me a sandwich, at your convenience, so that I will not be obligated to kill you, I would be humbly grateful.

Peasant: Mercy! I shall get you food at once!

Guard 1: Thank you very much.

Guard 2: That was shocking! You know quite well that the first of The Chairman's "Eight Points For Attention" with regard to army discipline is always speak politely.

Guard 1: I'm offended. I did indeed speak politely. I addressed him as "sir" at all times and said "please" and "thank you." If I had merely pointed my rifle at him and said "get me a beer and a sandwich or I will kill you," THAT would have been impolite.

Guard 2: I suppose so, but even disregarding that, the second of The Chairman's "Three Main Rules of Discipline" is do not take a single needle or piece of thread from the masses.

Guard 1: Firstly, I am not taking anything from the masses, I am taking something from this peasant who has the singular ill fortune to live so close to the border where the evil and heartless soldiers are. Secondly, I am not taking a needle or a piece of thread, I am taking a beer and a sandwich. So as you see, I am adhering both to the spirit and the letter of The Chairman's rules for discipline. One has only to look at the matter in a philosophical manner to see that this is the case.

Guard 2: You have a good case for obeying the letter of the Chairman's Rules, but I'm not totally convinced about your adherence to their spirit. After all, the Chairman says that every comrade must be helped to understand that as long as we rely on the people, believe firmly in the inexhaustible creative power of the masses and hence trust and identify ourselves with them, we can surmount any difficulty, and no enemy can crush us while we can crush any enemy.

Guard 1: But I do believe in the inexhaustible creative power of the masses, since, after all, I asked him to make me a sandwich.

Guard 2: Welllll...I suppose so.

Peasant (with food): Here is the food you have requested. Please take pity upon a humble peasant.

Guard 1: Certainly, and thank you for your hospitality, sir. You may return to your business.

(Peasant remains immobile.)

Well, what are you waiting for?

Peasant: The Chairman's second point in his "Eight Points for Attention" is pay fairly for what you buy. You haven't paid me for the food and drink I gave you.

Guard 1: Firstly, it ill behooves an unarmed peasant to give orders to an armed soldier. Secondly, I did not buy the food.

Peasant: The Chairman's Third Point For Attention is return anything you borrow.

Guard 1: I did not borrow the food, I took it. And I have no intention of paying for it or returning it. And if you continue to complain I will shoot you.

Peasant: But the Chairman's Fifth Point For Attention is do not hit or swear at people.

Guard 1: I did not hit you nor did I swear at you. I merely said that I will kill you if you do not cease to annoy me. And if you value your life, I suggest you heed that advice. Remember, as the Chairman says, without a People's Army the people have nothing.

Peasant: At this rate, WITH a people's army the people have nothing. Sometimes I wonder what could possibly be worse than my current situation.

Guard 1: A border skirmish with the Russian Army seems like a good candidate to me. In fact, perhaps you would like to join the army. All the slop you can eat, all the water you can drink, ten yuan a week and all you can pillage and commandeer. Of course, there are liabilities, like the Russian border, but taken with the advantages, army life is quite enticing.

(Curtain falls as Guard 1, Guard 2, and Peasant all walk off in the same direction.)

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DETERIORATA

Go placidly amid the noise & waste & remember what comfort there may be in owning a piece thereof. Avoid quiet & passive persons unless you are in need of sleep. Speak glowingly of those greater than yourself and heed well their advice even though they be turkeys: know what to kiss and when. Consider that two wrongs never make a right but that three do. Wherever possible put people on hold. Be comforted that in the face of all aridity and disillusionment and despite the changing fortunes of time, there is always a big fortune in computer maintenance. Remember the Pueblo. Strive at all times to bend, fold, spindle, & mutilate. Know yourself; if you need help, call the FBI. Exercise caution in your daily affairs, especially with persons closest to you. That lemon on your left, for instance. Be assured that a walk through the ocean of most souls would scarcely get your feet wet. Fall not in love therefore: it will stick to your face. Gracefully surrender the things of youth, birds, clean air, tuna, Taiwan; and let not the sands of time get in your lunch. Hire people with hooks. For a good time, call 606-4311; ask for Ken. Take heart amid the deepening gloom that your dog is finally getting enough cheese; and reflect that whatever misfortune may be your lot, it could only be worse in Milwaukee. You are a fluke of the universe; you have no right to be here, and whether you can hear it or not, the universe is laughing behind your back. Therefore make peace with your God whatever you conceive Him to be: Hairy Thunderer or Cosmic Muffin. With all its hopes, dreams, promises, & urban renewal, the world continues to deteriorate. Give up.

(Found in an old National Lampoon: Dated 1972.)

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One of the funniest science fiction fanzines I've ever seen is The Inverted Grapefruit. Its first issue, published a few months ago, had extremely poor physical quality, and included one horrible SF story, and an extremely funny satire of an SF convention entitled Star Trekkiesuperdupercosmicomicon. It's improved a lot since then; their second issue, published recently, was offset-printed and had a half-decent cover. It continued Star Trekkic blah-blah, took up three pages for apologies for past issues, and contained other items. Subs are 6/43.75. Write Greg Costikyan, 310 E 50st., NY, NY, 10022.

-- SAR

page ten

RARE TOLKIENIAN WORK: APOCRYPHAL HOBBIT MARCHING SONG

(translated from the Dark Tongue by Adam Kasanof)

Over da mountains I must go
And I got good reason, too, ya know
On a farmer's land I had trespassed
Chased away by a shotgun blast
And now I hope my feet don't fail
For the Shire police is on me tail.
Over da Misty Mountains bold,
Over da chests all heaped wit gold
Into da land of sin and perdition
Where I must go without a doubt,
Where they honor no writs of extradition
Till the statute of limitations runs out.
To the land of Mordor where da shadows lie
A six pack a year, sir, to quench me fear, sir, lest me courage fail
I'll stop in at a public house and invite the Dark Lord over for ale
After a measly six-pack to quench me fear, sir,
I'll invite ole Sauron up for a beer, sir,
In the Land of Fordor where the Shadow Knows.

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c/o Scott Rosenberg
182-31 Radnor Rd.
Jamaica, N.Y. 11432

return postage guaranteed
address correction requested

Rod Walker
417 Juniper
San Diego, Ca. 92101

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